

Altman Dedicated Direct

STRATEGY... TACTICS... **RESULTS**

Column: "After the Phone Rings ..."

Month: **June 2006**

Topic: **Welcoming New Customers**

Consider yourself as a customer making your first purchase. You overcame the innate risk of dealing with a new firm ... Will the product will be in stock and deliver the value anticipated when you decided to place your order? Will you be welcomed and know that your business is appreciated?

Your customers desire no less. But surveying direct response marketers of all sorts, I find most don't even include a "thank you" letter appreciating that first customer purchase, let alone a more elaborate offer. Having spent so much money to acquire new customers, it is distressing that so few take the next logical step. Consider new customer welcome letters as inexpensive public relations. Everyone likes being thanked and appreciated and your welcome/thank you letter puts a positive face on your company to each new customer. Who wouldn't think more favorably about another purchase from a company that thanks and appreciates them, versus one that takes them for granted?

If you don't have a new customer welcome program – what should you include? Here are 5 possibilities to consider and their benefits:

1. Thank you/Welcome Letter

This is a prelude to anything else you do. The letter should be written by someone whose identity matters to your new customer... perhaps your president or head of customer service. Make sure the message tone is appreciative. Incorporate basics of how to interact with your firm (methods of purchase, how to make a return, service hours). These steps can go a long way to setting expectations and eliminating customer frustration later. Consider *personalized* letters, as new customers will pay more attention to these.

2. Information on other products available for sale

This can take the form of catalogs or other inserts. Be sure you educate your new customer regarding the breadth and depth of your product line, giving them the largest opportunity to find another item to purchase sooner rather than later.

3. Discount offer for a second order

What's the most important thing to get a new buyer to do? Buy again! A two-time buyer is more profitable and likely to respond to future promotions than a one-time buyer. So develop a special new buyer offer to ride along in the shipping box of the first purchase – a discount or "free with 2nd order" offer where the "free" gift is highly desirable. Highlight that this offer is exclusively for new customers.



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4. Unannounced Free Gift

Who doesn't love a surprise gift? The gift should be something of interest to most new customers. It doesn't have to have a high price tag, but please don't give away the lime green wallets no one wanted. An unannounced bonus gift tells new customers that they are dealing with a company that gives more than expected.

5. Get-a-Friend Offer

When your new customer receives their purchase can be an ideal time to get them to extol your virtues by sharing their "find" with a friend via a "get-a-friend" promotion. The best approach is to offer a discount or free gift to both the new customer (thank you for sharing with his/her friend) and the friend, but of course the offers to each will likely be different.

So how will you welcome new customers? Consider your audience, other active promotions, and what is operationally feasible. Like other aspects of direct response marketing, this is an area where testing options can be important to finding the best solution for your business. No matter which approaches you choose to take, saying "thank you" and "we appreciate your business" is always valued, and often rewarded in the form of additional purchases.

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